



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

Senator Johnson Introduces Legislation to Roll Back Per Diem Increases; Institute 2-Year Freeze

CRAIG M. JOHNSON October 14, 2009

Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau), announced today that he is introducing legislation to roll back per diem increases for members of the State Legislature.

The measure would re-establish per diem levels at the last legislative session's rate, and freeze them for the next two years.

For Albany travel, these payments -- which are pegged to federal standards and were not raised by legislative action -- rose \$11-a day, or 6.8 percent, this month. Per diems cover lodging and related expenses for Assembly and Senate members who travel to Albany and other locations on legislative business.

"We should be setting an example," Senator Johnson said. "While the cost of this increase is a drop in the bucket compared to the current budget deficit that we face, this increase is simply inappropriate during this economic crisis. This legislation will help set the appropriate tone for the challenges that lie ahead."

Senators David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida), William Stachowski, (D-Lake View), and Darrel Aubertine, (D-Cape Vincent), have committed to co-sponsoring this legislation.

"In this difficult economic climate, the Legislature must adopt practices that save taxpayers money, not increase costs," Senator Valesky said. "Though freezing per diem costs will not solve the fiscal crisis, this legislation represents a new way of thinking in Albany, based on principles of prudence and responsibility."

"When it comes to combating New York State's growing deficit, every bit of savings counts," Senator Stachowski said. "We need to lead by example and this legislation embodies the kind of common sense and fiscal discipline that is needed."

"While this alone certainly isn't going to close our budget gap, I hope it sends the message that no cuts are off the table right now in getting this state's finances under control and we are working to put the taxpayers of the State of New York first," Senator Aubertine said. "I look forward to working with Senator Johnson, the Governor, and all of my colleagues in the Legislature to put together a responsible, balanced budget."

If this legislation passes, and this harsh economic climate still exists in two years, Senator Johnson will introduce additional legislation to extend the freeze. Discussions with potential Assembly sponsors are ongoing.